DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 381 468 SO 024 839

AUTHOR Neisler, Otherine Johnson
TITLE Inside Social Studies at Castleton High School: Implications for Curriculum Reform.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 36p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Social Studies (Phoenix, AZ, November 17-22, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; Educational Research; High Schools; Public Schools; *Secondary School Curriculum; *Social Studies; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS New York

ABSTRACT

This research paper describes a 2-year project, conducted in 1992-1994, at Castleton High School with an enrollment of 1,200 students (grades 9-12) in north central New York State. The school serves a multiethnic, urban population with a wide socioeconomic range. The author worked collaboratively with the principal and four social studies teachers to facilitate the observations of 18 students in several social studies classes at all four grade levels. By classroom observations, hall observations, student interviews, field notes, and papers collected in the classroom, the following questions were addressed: (1) What are the students' perspectives about the materials, information, activities and interactions that are part of their secondary social studies courses?; (2) What types of sociopolitical attitudes have students formed?; (3) How do students use the information provided in the classroom to form, modify, or reinforce their sociopolitical attitudes and behaviors?; and (4) What processes do students employ in changing or verifying their sociopolitical attitudes during their high school years? Answers to these questions may inform the design of citizenship education in secondary schools. Implications that the findings of the study have for curricular reform, findings which support earlier research in the social studies are discussed. Suggestions to help teachers build expertise in the use of a wide range of teaching methods and models are given. (EH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 381 468

Inside Social Studies at Castleton High School: Implication for Curriculum Reform

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

OTHERINE JOHNSON NEISLER

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Otherine Johnson Neisler
Assistant Professor
Boston College
Campion 223
Chestnut Hill, MA 02167
(617) 552-0677
E-Mail NEISLEROJ@HERMES.bc.edu

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
National Council of Social Studies
November 17-22, 1994
Phoenix, Arizona

SO 024 839

When the National Education Goals were adopted by the nation's governors and the President in 1989 citizenship education was highlighted as a national educational priority. So important is citizenship education that two of the six National Education Goals (NEAP, 1992) emphasize the focus. The text of the two goals states:

> "By the year 2000, all students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy." (Goal Three: p. 24)
>
> "By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." (Goal Five: p. 40)

While no citizenship standards are tracked for Goal Five, citizenship knowledge and voter participation are tracked for assessment of national progress toward the accomplishment of Goal Three. "In 1988, nearly all 12th graders had a basic knowledge of civics, such as elections, laws, and constitutional rights. However, only about half understood specific government structures and functions, such as separation of powers, and only 6% had a detailed knowledge of political institutions of government such as the Cabinet and the judiciary." (NEAP, p. 31). In 1990 only 7% of all tenth grade students reported that they performed community service regularly and 79% said they never performed community service.

Voting statistics are also tracked. Since 1972 voter participation of 18 to 20-year-olds has declined. In 1972 59% of that population registered to vote compared

with 48% in 1988. In 1972 49% of 18 to 20-year-olds actually voted compared with 35% in 1988. Voting, community volunteerism, and other forms of citizenship participation are declining.

Political apathy among young adults is also increasing. The Kettering Foundation (1993) reports on focus group discussions at ten campuses across the nation. Their data support five major themes.

1. Students hear pessimistic messages about politics.
2. Students cite name-calling and back-stabbing as the major components of campaigns and elections.
3. Students do not believe that political speeches are consistent with political actions and decisions.
4. Students feel that only the financially powerful can influence politics.
5. Students do not see a role for themselves except through protests.

The apathy is summarized in the following quote by a University of California, Berkeley male student:

> Personally I feel like I'm very interested. I talk about [issues] with friends, but I don't act in any way. I never protest, I hardly ever vote, I never do anything. I don't really know how to act, I don't really know how to express all the things I feel. I think a lot of people who are interested just kind of give up (Kettering, 1993: p. 34).

Another student, a young woman from Gonzaga University highlights the inadequacy of education in political socialization:

> I have a feeling that from all the education I've had, the one thing that I've learned is, to be quite honest, I can't change anything (p.33).

While the Kettering Researchers interviewed college students, these attitudes may be reflective of those held by our high school students who are only three to four years younger.

Voter participation is not the only reason that citizenship education has been established as a national priority along with preeminence in mathematics and science. Additionally, the attitudes and behaviors of our teenagers will determine the country's future. Our secondary students are developing the attitudes and skills that will have a far-reaching impact in our society. Contemporary problems of violence, tolerance, political participation, world hunger, and world peace will be managed by our students as they assume their adult roles in our society.

As a social studies educator, a teacher educator, a curriculum designer, a mother of a teenager, and a believer in active involvement of all citizens in the political process, I want to understand how our young citizens come to understand their role as citizens. Although, I am aware of the influence of multiple factors on the development of sociopolitical attitudes, I am focusing on the impact of the interactions centered within the social studies classroom. Of the academic subjects, social studies most consistently and intensely is concerned with student attitude development.

Research Questions

The main research questions this study addresses are:

1. What are the students perspectives about the materials, information, activities and interactions that are part of their secondary social studies courses?

2. What types of sociopolitical attitudes have students formed?

3. How do students use the information provided in the classroom to form, modify, or reinforce their sociopolitical attitudes and behaviors?

4. What processes do students employ in changing or verifying their sociopolitical attitudes during their high school years?

The answers to these questions may inform the design of citizenship education in the secondary schools.

From my previous experience teaching high school students, I learned they have formed some sociopolitical attitudes and that these attitudes do change during adolescence. Goals in my social studies classes were directed toward attitude formation but I knew little about how students perceived the curricula, courses, and lessons.

Other researchers have explained the importance of this line of inquiry. Greenstein (1970) suggests that understanding the processes of adolescent political learning will prove to be an important link in maintenance of the democratic political system. He further recommended that it as an important process for the analyst to study. Greenstein is concerned with adolescent citizenship education as it relates to the maintenance of American democracy

The theoretical foundations of McNeil's work (1988) also undergird the present study. McNeil explains that:

> [There has been a] tendency to obscure what is happening to the student; often there is the assumption that socialization is occurring because the processes of socialization and social control are so entrenched. In addition, this perspective has tended to emphasize the role of

> schools in shaping what students do after they leave school, rather than the educational effects within the controlling institution. There has been a dearth of empirical work on the actual dynamics of classroom learning and how they are affected by the broader organization of schools. (pp. xviii-xix)

I designed this study of students at Castleton High to explore the actual dynamics of the classroom and the students' interpretations of those dynamics. In support of these aims, the primary theoretical approach I followed was that of symbolic interaction. The symbolic interaction perspective assumes that there is no given meaning to classroom activities, but that meaning is defined and negotiated by students and teachers through their interactions and experiences. It is the illumination of the student's own understanding that forms the focus of this research.

Methodology

Castleton High School, the site of the study, is located on the east side of a North Central New York State city of approximately 160,000 people as of the 1990 census (Chamber of Commerce, 1993). The school serves a multi-ethnic, urban population with a wide socio-economic range. The ethnic backgrounds of the 1200 students enrolled in grades 9-12 include: 45% White, 45% Black, and 10% Asian, Hispanic and other groups.

The principal and four social studies teachers worked with me to facilitate my observation of several classes. I selected the classrooms based on the grade level and teacher willingness to be included in a two-year project. I observed at all four grade levels in order to collect data which are informative about the developmental nature of attitude transformation during high school. The classes included were the

ninth and tenth grade Global Studies, eleventh grade American History, twelfth grade Participation in Government, and African-American History, which enrolls eleventh and twelfth grade students.

Observation Procedures

Qualitative studies of students rather than of their interactions with teachers is rare (Preissle-Goetz, Judith and LeCompte, Margaret D., 1991). Preissle-Goetz and colleagues suggest that future research explore student perceptions of their worlds. I conducted the study in the natural setting of the classroom and the school corridors (Lincoln, 1985) in order to understand student perceptions within the school. I also collected copies of materials that are part of their environment such as class assignments, worksheets, and essays as well as copies of the school newspaper, school bulletins, and photographs of hall displays.

To ascertain the change in perspective about social studies as well as the change in socio-political attitudes over the four years of high school study, I implemented a cross-sectional study and collected data for two years. The study began in September 1992 and continued through June 1994. Over 150 sets of fieldnotes document the classroom observations.

Interview Procedures

While all of the Castleton students live within two miles of the school, their individual worlds are vastly different. I wanted to interview as wide a variety of students as possible. I decided to select students based on criteria that are observable in the classroom. These factors include: class participation, attendance,

apparent interest level, classroom behaviors, and obvious physical features that might indicate ethnic diversity of the selected group. Teachers provided grade point averages.

Most of the eighteen students were interviewed individually. (Refer to Table 1 for information concerning interview type, grade point average in social studies, grade student was in when interviewed, ethnic background and gender, and observed classroom behaviors.) Each participant was asked if he or she would be willing to be interviewed. All but one agreed without hesitation. Each returned a consent form signed by their parents or guardians and we scheduled a time for the interview. Two forms were signed by eighteen year- old students who knew of their rights.

Table 1
Description of Sample

(The legend appears at the end of the table)

Name	Grade	Interview Type	SS GPA	F/M Ethnic	Classroom Behavior
Susan	9	Individual	78	F - W	Quiet, talks to other females, seldom raises hand
Jerome	9	Individual	50	M - AA	Often late, talks back to teacher, does not participate in class
Ralph	9	Individual	85	M - W	Often late, wanders around room, does not participate in class, football player
Jacob	9	Individual	87	M - W	Active in class
Makeba	9	Individual	80	F - A*	Active in class, presents new information for discussion
Roger	10	Individual	90	M - W	Very quiet, does not participate, looks bored
Jeremiah	10	Individual	85	M - W	Active in class, speaks out, reluctant to be interviewed
Lorraine	9&10	Individual	80	F-AA	Active in class
Issa	11	Group and Individual	89	M - A*	Challenges teacher and students, voices controversial opinions
Lisa	11	Group	85	F - AA	Participates, blind

Yvonne	11	Group and informal individual	80	F - AA	Participates and defends opinions, organizational leader
Maria	11	Group	75	F - L	Participates if called on, talks to friends
Jacqueline	11	Group	93	F - W	Participates in class, will challenge other students.
Eleanor	12	Group	90	F - W	Sits quietly, raises hand for considered responses
Peter	12	Group and Individual	70	M -W	Volunteers in class, will engage in debate with other students, defends opinions, community activist, enthusiastic about social studies.
Steve	12	Individual	70	M - AA	Talks and gets out of seat, participates often dominates class discussion
Nadine	11 &12	Individual	90	F - M	Participates when called on
Gerry	12	Group and Individual	65	M - AA	Participates in class, organizational leader, activist.

F - Female
M - Male

A* - African other born in United States (e.g. African/Jamaican/American)
AA - African American
L - Latino
M - Mixed (African American and White)
W - White

At the beginning of each interview I told the student that I wanted to understand what she thought about social studies, that I needed student ideas and opinions to be able to design materials and curricula for social studies classes. I reminded each person that I was a doctoral student and that the interview data was also part of my research project. I explained that their participation was voluntary. They could stop at any time or refuse to answer any question. Their participation in no way affected their grades. Most students wanted me to use their real names however I explained that I would not do so and that their identity would be disguised. Their words, ideas, and opinions would be used. The teachers would have access to my reports but would not be able to identify the students. The teachers were not told which students I interviewed.

Interviews were conducted in the school, usually in a quiet corner of the library, during study hall or after school. The interviews were audio taped unless a student objected. Only one student, Jeremiah, asked me to take notes of his interview.

To test the interview structure, I conducted three preliminary interviews. I began by asking students one of two questions.

1. What do you think about social studies?

2. What have you learned in social studies?

Students responded to the first question in several ways. They talked about subject matter, teachers, the course, social studies in general, social studies as related to their lives, a specific event in the class, and/or people in their class. The second question lead them to consider social studies as an academic subject and the range of

responses was more narrow. Therefore I usually began with Question One, reserving the second question for later in the interview.

After the first question, I followed the student's lead for the direction of the interview. I had to listen carefully and ask questions to make certain that I followed their logic. They spoke of things I would not have expected them to relate to social studies. In many cases I do not believe that the students consciously made the connections either. They made free associations similar to those characteristic in psychoanalysis. Greenstein (1970) discusses this phenomenon as related to his research. Greenstein explains the differences between projective and semi-projective questioning versus objective survey questioning to establish the theoretical basis for his use of semi-projective questioning of children concerning their political orientation.

The question "What do you think of social studies?" is projective and allows students to explain the meaning that they make of social studies. Their answers are not limited to my definitions. This strategy served to illuminate some unanticipated results of the social studies classes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was on going. After each interview a typed transcription was prepared. I coded each interview based on the information contained. I had no preset codes. Some of the initial codes included, description of students, teachers, and the school, purpose of social studies, feeling about social studies, schedule, attendance, classroom methods such as lecture, group discussion, recitation, map work, student/teacher interaction, dress, language, and announcements.

As themes emerged such as 'The Purpose of Social Studies,' I collected all of the data related to that code. Then I coded the data into sub-categories such as:

- learn from the past
- graduation requirement
- need for career
- learn about people
- citizenship education

I further analyzed some coded data by a second or third code. For example, I looked at purpose by grade to determine if there was a possible developmental pattern. As each new interview was conducted, I asked questions based on emerging themes. I was able to verify the universality of a theme. For example, it first appeared that teacher personality might determine whether or not the student enjoyed social studies class. As the interviews progressed, I verified that this was a determining factor for some students but for others the subject matter was more influential.

By December break 1993, I had over one year of observations and interviews with 16 students. I decided to stop the classroom observations unless a teacher suggested that a particular class would be interesting. After finalizing the coding categories, I recoded and resorted the data. At this point I also sorted the data against theory and research literature I collected. The comparison of thematic data to a theory or prior research usually served to verify or explain the emergent theme. However, in some cases a new theme developed. This occurred when I compared two sets of coded data -inaccurate information and multiple perspectives, to

adolescent development literature. While I kept the original codes, I cross referenced them with the themes of 'search for the truth' and 'dealing with ethnicity.'

In January 1994 after discussions with the teachers, I decided to administer a questionnaire to students in four classes. The seven questions were open-ended and projective though to a lesser extent then the interview questions. (See Appendix A for a copy of the complete questionnaire.) I designed the questions to provide more information on the themes that had developed from the interview data. I coded the questionnaire responses using my existing codes if they were appropriate and developed new codes when necessary. I also looked for developmental patterns and compared data to theories and prior research as I had done for the interview data. As I discuss the findings, interview and questionnaire data are combined.

Students discuss their citizenship education

The major emphasis of this paper is the development of Castleton students' sociopolitical attitudes. Before I began that discussion, however, I will discuss two other themes from the data. These themes serve to establish the students perceptions of the social studies arena wherein they come to grapple with the attitude formation process. These two themes are 1) Rushing through bits and pieces of information and 2) The search for the truth.

Students revealed that they are rushed through remembering bits of information - facts, dates, names - which have no meaning for them. They developed no frame of understanding for how social studies information, skills, and interactions were important to their lives. The rush was felt throughout the day as well as in

individual classes. Roger discussed an end of the term class session in June 1993.

> Yesterday, he didn't give us much time. And a lot of it is that you have to analyze the questions

He did not have enough time to do an in-class assignment. Eleanor also explained how there was not enough time to discuss class topics. She related what happened in a specific class:

> A lot of people see the slave trade as Black people and White people. There were White devils and the Black slaves. But there were also Black slave owners and there were Black slaves. So that small portion of Black history causes conflict today. And we're not taught about every aspect. There's not enough time.

Eleanor felt that conflict developed in her class because students did not have enough time to investigate all of the aspects of slavery. Students formed opinions and acted on fragmentary knowledge. She thought that in-depth inquiry would have generated a more conciliatory outcome.

The students expressed a sense of being rushed during their classes, when covering course material, and when doing assignments. I saw them rushing from place to place - jumping up when the bell rang. Many conversations trailed off as students ran to their next class or to catch the bus.

Bits and Pieces

In combination with the feeling of being rushed, students complained that they were taught bits and pieces of information (facts and dates) without being taught the framework. One such student, Roger, articulated his frustration. He explained: 1) his expectation for future learning, 2) his analysis of what he was expected to learn in

social studies, and 3) his perspective of the tenth grade course.

> To tell the truth, I don't really like it that much because it's hard for me to memorize all the dates and stuff. You don't learn the interesting aspects of it, you just walk through it and learn the points and dates. You don't really learn how it affects you. I'm just going to be learning like foundations, facts and stuff like that before I learn more upper level stuff. I think maybe in college it would seem more interesting to learn about it.

Roger explained what researchers such as McNeil (1988) found during their studies of high school classes. There is a serious though shallow presentation of factual information. Almost the exact words were used by students interviewed by Mallery (1962). Students were asked to reflect on "the influence of school on the kind of person you are" (p. 23). Two students from the Mallery study, explain why school was not a major influence in their lives:

> "school isn't related to morals and those things. In school they give us the facts" (p. 24).
>
> "I haven't had a chance in any course to really think. They tell us you go to school to widen your understanding and all, but where are you supposed to do it?" (p. 160.).

Roger however, hoped that application, synthesis, and evaluation would come from later study.

In addition students had difficulty forming a framework for the pieces of information that they learned. In other studies (Mallery, 1962; Goodlad, 1984; and McNeil, 1988) students reported that what they learn in social studies did not relate to anything important in their lives and often made little sense to them.

Adelson and O'Neil (1966) submit that the acquisition of bits and pieces of information from high school teaching is a result of adolescent development. They

explain the relationship between cognitive development and the development of sociopolitical attitudes and information retention:

> "During adolescence the youngster gropes, stumbles, and leaps towards political understanding. Prior to these years the child's sense of the political order is erratic and incomplete - a curious array of sentiments and dogmas, personalized ideas, randomly remembered names and party labels, half-understood platitudes. By the time adolescence has come to an end, the child's mind much of the time, moves easily within and among the categories of political discourse (p. 295).

From the findings of Adelson and O'Neil, we could assume that regardless of teaching strategies, adolescents would still develop fragmentary knowledge structures. In contrast, instructional designers such as West, Farmer and Wolff (1991) explain the effectiveness of instructional strategies such as clearly stated goals, advance organizers, concept maps, organizing strategies, and use of metaphors in addressing the cognitive needs of adolescents. I did not find any instance where these strategies were used in the social studies classes that I observed.

Search for the Truth

During their four years of required social studies courses, students at Castleton proclaimed a search for the truth. This theme was widespread and recurring. I heard it in class and in both group and individual interviews. The search for the truth is not new to this generation of teenagers. Albert Schweitzer recounts the following:

> "Between my fourteenth and sixteenth years I passed through an unpleasant phase of development, becoming an intolerable nuisance to everybody, especially to my father, through a passion for discussion...The joy of seeking for what was true and serviceable had come upon

> me like a kind of intoxication, and every conversation in which I took part had to go back to the fundamentals." Albert Schweitzer (Kiel, 1964. p 482).

The search for the truth is a timeless and universal adolescent quest.

Several students discussed their perceptions of this search for the truth. Steve felt he had found some of the truth he sought. He explained:

> I started reading things that they never told me in history class that are actual facts. And so, then it made me feel proud of myself. Not because I was proud or boastful, just that when you look for something that's hidden and you find it, you're proud. I was with The Nation and that's where I got these books from and I read them. I did better in school.

Steve's search led him to find new information about the history of Africans and African Americans which in turn enhanced his self pride. The end result was his return to and graduation from Castleton High School.

Despite their demands for the truth, most students do not think that the truth is static information that can be uncovered. One such student, Makeba, expressed her understanding of the process of developing personal truth.

> My father tells me what he thinks is the truth. And then I'll put it into my mind and I decide which one I go by.

Makeba solicited information from respected sources as aids in her 'truth' formation process. Her explanation implied an acceptance of the idea that each person can accept or form different truths. She knew her truths might be different from those of her father.

Several students wanted a more accurate curriculum and materials. While few were able to provide specific examples, Lorraine was ready when I asked her for one.

She told how the book did not tell the real story of the opium trade in China. However, her telling of the story was almost identical to the textbook passages. I was perplexed and returned to listen to her interview tape. As I listened to her voice and recalled her body movements I realized that she was expressing emotion at this enslavement of an entire culture, to a narcotic. She was not saying "By the early 1800's opium addiction touched all levels of society." She said "they're getting paid off somebody else's addiction" with great emphasis. Lorraine didn't want neutral language, she wanted outrage. She may perceive lack of emotion as a lack of truth.

Two researchers documented related findings. Goodlad (1984) reported that "the classes...at all levels, tended not to be marked with exuberance, joy, laughter, abrasiveness...or high interpersonal tension" (p.112). While he related these emotions to the learning atmosphere and supportive teaching strategies, the emotions may also relate to The perceived reality of the presented information or materials.

McNeil (1988) explained that the simplistic presentation of social studies content and its air of unreality, was very different from the reality of the events. The unreality of the presentation led students to be skeptical of the credibility of what they learn in school. For Lorraine emotion is part of the truth. On the other hand, Lorraine did have opportunity within her classroom discussions to express her anger, joy, disgust, empathy. I'm not certain whether or not what is happening should be left to the students' internal processes. It is an area I would like to discuss with students and adolescent psychologists. Such discussions have not been part of my teacher or instructional design training. Yet, I can see the value of understanding what students

mean by the "truth."

Students also related the disposition of ethnicity to the search for the truth. Concerns and attitudes held by students and teachers occasioned many discussions about gender, race and ethnicity. Students discussed how teachers' attitudes about race affected how they taught and how they interacted with students. Students questioned whether materials used in class adequately address racial and gender perspectives.

Students often brought up examples of prejudice and discrimination during the interviews and sometimes in class. Jacob and I were discussing how much he hated American history when he told me:

Jacob What really got me mad is she uses Hebrew a lot, which is like, it's kind of like being called a Negro. You know, because they called them Hebrews like when they were slaves.

OJ Oh, really. I didn't know that.

Jacob Yeah, people called the Jews, Hebrews, when they were slaves in Egypt. And like, it's kind of like saying you're a ***Hebrew***!#! (Jacob spits out the word from a tight frowning mouth.) And it really gets me mad.

OJ Umm, that's some new information to me. Have you told her this.

Jacob No, because, I don't know, I don't like talking out that much. I like keeping it to myself.

Jacob is Jewish and explained an interpretation of "Hebrew" I had not heard before. He also implied that the use of the word "Negro" has negative connotations. The use of these terms was important to him but he did not feel comfortable initiating

classroom discussions. Other words were used during class sessions, such as gay, queer, freak, white devil, black, white, Irish, Italian, and Asian without definition. Nor was there an examination of the meanings by the students who used them or about whom they were used.

Prejudices and feelings of discrimination remained hidden and hence, unexamined and unchanged. Students saw this as a serious issue. In an interview, printed in the school newspaper, Usef Gilbert, a student athlete, explained that racism was the biggest issue facing teens today. Race, ethnicity, and gender propel students to want additional topics and perspectives included in the social studies curriculum. It is evident that students want a curriculum that provides multiple perspectives and multiple sources of information from which they can determine their own interpretation of the events. They want a more realistic examination of the events, topics, problems, and successes of history.

However, the process of revising the curricula is complex and based on some fundamental societal problems such as racism, sexism, homophobia. Issa discusses attempts to provide multiple perspectives for analysis in the classroom:

> But I mean it seems so hard to teach new social studies when you're not over the old social studies, the old English, the old stereotypes. This is 1993-94. We got books that are still telling the same lies from like the 12th century.

Issa summarizes the problem of changing the curricula without dissecting or correcting the misconceptions.

Attitude Formation

"Most [adolescents] have political or social theories and want to reform the world; they have their

own ways of explaining all of the present day turmoil in collective life. Some write down their ideas and it is extremely interesting to see the outlines which are taken up and filled in later life. Others are limited to talking and ruminating, but each one has his own ideas (and usually he believes they are his own) which liberate him from childhood and allow him to place himself as the equal to adults" (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958, p. 340-341).

Castleton adolescents indeed have formed many sociopolitical attitudes. The attitudes they discussed covered a wide range of topics such as crime, violence, racism, abortion, right to life, homelessness, poverty, education reform, alcoholism, and unemployment. Castleton students were engaging in thoughtful discussion of the problems they must handle as they assume their role as citizens.

In this section, I address one of my major research questions, "How do students form or change their sociopolitical attitudes?" I relate the theories and findings of adolescent psychologists to the student data to determine if there is a process model which is useful in understanding how adolescents form attitudes.

Two adolescent psychologists, Ianni (1989) and Seltzer (1989), offer complimentary explanations of the process students employ during the socialization and attitude formation process. Ianni finds that students are 'me' focused and seek to achieve personal mastery over their ideas and beliefs. They bring information into their personal sphere, accept, reject, or change it, and then make it their own.

Seltzer adds three points to the analysis of the attitude development mechanism. First, the young adolescent is like a blank slate. Information is pulled in, sorted, sifted, and replaced during this phase of self-definition. Second, the adolescent mind apprehends the sociopolitical world in a significantly different manner

than does the adult mind. The adolescent engages in a constant and predominately subliminal process of self assessment against the outside model held separate for only a moment. The teenager superimposes herself onto the new information, reassesses, and redefines herself.

Third, Seltzer reports that some students are aware of the process. For example, Paul, a senior, explains his metacognitive awareness of this process as he responds to Questions 1 and 2 of the questionnaire.

Question 1, Part 1: 1. Think of an issue or problem that faces American citizens, that you feel strongly about. What is the issue or problem? Explain what you think about it or explain what action you believe should be taken.

> American Involvement overseas. I'm not at the extreme of an isolationist, however I feel we are involved in ways we shouldn't be.

Part 2: How did you come to have that opinion? What influenced you or helped you make up your mind? Explain things you read or saw on TV? Which people did you talk with? How were you influenced by anything you learned in school, or by events you witnessed?

> I don't have a definite opinion on this issue yet. I have to debate with myself and others before I can come up with a solution. The above is more of a hypothesis.

Question 2, Part 1: Did you always think the same way about the issue you discussed in question 1? Explain how and why you changed your mind.

> I waffle on the issues constantly, say on the issue of capital punishment. One morning I may wake up and feel that we should "kill all of them" and other days I feel that it is wrong. I think that each situation must be carefully weighed individually because of mitigating circumstances.

Part 2: Why did you change your mind? What did you think about as you developed your new opinion?

> I usually change my mind every time a new piece of knowledge comes my way but on certain items my conscience leads the way.

Paul's response is important since prior attitudinal questionnaire research indicates that students have formed attitudes about many sociopolitical topics by the end of middle school (Coles, 1986; Hess and Tourney, 1967). However, several Castleton students explained that they "have just begun to think about important topics." The data from these students suggest that even if students express an attitude, they are still in the process of evaluation and reformation during the high school years.

Not all follow the exact process. Some students, like Roger may be aware of the process of attitude change but still have some set attitudes which they do not consider open for discussion and/or change. Roger explained:

Roger People know my opinion. I don't really [get into discussions about it] because I've heard the arguments against what I think. So I don't care about it...For example, on pro-life. If people around me are talking about pro-choice I don't bother to argue against them because I know it'll get them riled up. I already know what they are going to say and I don't want to bother with it.

OJ So you wouldn't think that somebody in the school would have something to say that you hadn't already heard?

Roger I don't want to count that out. I mean I've heard a lot of things that I have based my opinion on.

Roger formed his attitude after an evaluation of information from his reading, his minister, and discussions with family. He did not feel that his peers could present relevant new information. Therefore, class discussions on this topic did not seem important to him. Both Paul and Roger described aspects of an attitude formation process similar to those discussed by Ianni and Seltzer.

Cognitive development also plays a role in the formation of student attitudes and differences in cognitive ability were found among high school students. Karen, a ninth grade student, was having difficulty with the abstraction of historical empathy.

Karen Social studies and I just don't click. I don't find it difficult. But I do, however, find that I don't remember much of what is taught. The thing is that it's hard to see things first hand if it has already happened. Unlike science, where you can use experiments to interest students.

Karen, in contrast to Paul, was not able to handle abstract ideas. She preferred the concrete, hands-on experience.

While it is evident that students were forming, changing, and reinforcing a wide range of sociopolitical attitudes during their senior high school years, there were developmental and cognitive factors that, at times limited as well as facilitated, the character of the attitudes. The difference between Paul and Karen was expected because of the age and grade differences, but such diverse developmental stages were often apparent in a single class. In general, as adolescents age, their ability to grapple with abstractions and with the complexity of community issues increases.

Implication for Social Studies Instruction

Castleton students reiterated information that had been reported in previous studies

These confirming findings include:

- Students are bored in social studies classes.
- Students understand the purposes and objectives of their classes that do not agree with those stated by teachers or the curriculum
- From survey courses, students learn isolated facts for which they form no framework or relationships.
- Students have limited knowledge of the political systems and are not able to apply that information when solving community problems.
- The teaching methods of lecture, large group recitation, classroom reading and seatwork are most frequently used in social studies classes.
- Students do not perceive social studies information to be relevant to their real lives.

My first inclination as I review this list is to prescribe curriculum changes. First, the piecemeal acquisition of knowledge can be reduced. Although Adelson and O'Neil (1967) helped clarify the adolescent learning process which engenders the acquisition of bits and pieces of information rather than a unified framework. Instructional designers such as West, Farmer, and Wolff (1992) have provided instructional strategies which maximize the building of frameworks and relationships. They recommend the use of clearly stated purposes, goals, and objectives which are discussed with students. These should be combined with advance organizers, outlines, concept maps, organization charts, decision matrixes, information webs, and pneumonics to help students organize information into meaningful structures.

The rush through survey type courses can be reduced by curricula which focus on fewer topics in more depth. The new NCSS guidelines recommend basing instruction of student interests. Students could select current or historical topics and apply social science skills in their pursuit of understanding or solving the questions that capture their imagination. They would learn skills and the information processing techniques relevant to their own concerns rather than the dates and facts they now memorize.

Adolescent psychologists Ianni (1989) and Seltzer (1989) have provided explanations of how students sort through information and make it their own as they form their sociopolitical attitudes. Students explain how they sort through, try out and debate new information. Students need to try out the expression of their newly formed attitudes. They seek opportunities for debate knowing that this intellectual engagement will help them try out new ideas and refine their old ones. Instructional designers such as Joyce and Weil (1986), Romiszowski (1992), and Martin and Briggs (1986) have defined teaching models and methods which can assist in the design of social studies instruction which might facilitate the development of sociopolitical attitudes. They all suggest that teaching strategies such as role play, simulation, panel discussions, debate, mock trials, drama, poetry, and fiction are more effective tools for attitude formation and change than textbook reading and memorization of facts. Goodlad (1984) reported findings which represent the 1992-1993 status at Castleton. There is a fifty percent chance of finding classroom activities of reading, large group recitation, and seat work being conducted whenever you enter a classroom. I saw two

class debates, four role play activities, and five films in the two years I was at Castleton. I saw no evidence of the use of the other models of instruction.

I also think that students need opportunities to practice and apply what they have learned to real life problems. The Reis and Rezulli (1985) Triad model for gifted students has applicability in a heterogeneous social studies classroom. The model provides for the customization of instruction based on student interest but could accommodate student abilities as well. In addition, there is an ooutline for student involvement in community problem solving.

While we have individual instructional components for effective citizenship education, I have found few instances where the knowledge from adolescent psychology, political socialization, instructional design, and social studies education have been pulled together to form a systematic model. Chilcoat and Ligon (1994) examination of the Mississippi Freedom Schools provides a model which address many of the students' concerns.

However, these prescriptions are not new. As cited earlier, other researchers have made similar suggestions. A more serious question to address is why these changes have not been implemented at Castleton. In my limited discussions with the teachers, they explain their responsibilities to the current curriculum and to the preparation of students for the Regents examinations. Neither of these forces is as fixed as the Castleton teachers perceive them to be. First teachers have considerable flexibility in how they choose to teach a subject such as global studies however, resources such as textbooks are limited. Also, the Regents examinations are not as

factually oriented as teachers suggest. In sections of the examination, students are asked to evaluate and interpret information provided in the examination itself. Schools can also request to suspend the Regents examination when they wish to implement new curriculum or alternate forms of assessment. Only Mr. Brandford discusses these alternatives.

When selecting teaching methods, the Castleton faculty appears to consider methods such as debates, simulations, film, role play, and mock trials as attention getting extras that are diversions for students, rather than critical teaching methods which are best used for achieving specific goals. It appears that the teacher's' knowledge of and experience with the use of these methods is minimal. The curriculum guides do not provide example of the use of varied methods for achieving a range of goals. Therefore even a teacher such as Mrs. Willis, who wants to vary classroom methods, lacks the expertise and resources to truly integrate a variety of teaching models throughout her course.

Her attitudes are not consistent with her behavior. It is possible that Abelson's (1972) criteria of practice, rewards, and emotional investment were not part of her professional training. They were not part of my teacher education programs until I entered a doctoral program. Further, the practice of using a variety of teaching models in the courses I teach, is met with student resistance, and my rewards are usually self congratulatory.

Sleeter's (1992) study of a professional development program offers insight into

the change process. Many of the teachers in her program did not change their teaching method or materials. She felt that their attitudes were the basis for the continuation of the status quo. I contend that the teachers were not given opportunities to practice any of the suggested new methods except group work. They all increased their use of group assignments in their classes. Also the teachers were not allowed to explore the reasons for change or encouraged to develop their own criteria. Therefore they did not become emotionally involved in the change process.

To some extent the same patterns are present at Castleton. Mr. Brandford previously worked on the curriculum development team for two subjects. Even though he is only two years from retirement, he showed the most dedication to trying out various methods. He was the only teacher to verify some of my findings through his own classroom research and to implement changes. However his analysis was only directed toward the students acquisition of factual knowledge.

In addition to including teachers as integral members of research teams, the following steps might also help teachers build expertise in the use of a wide range of teaching methods and models.

- more practice with method in teacher education programs
- in service methods and teaching model seminars and practice sessions
- opportunities to view other teachers' use of a variety of teaching methods and models
- teacher access to data bases of lessons based on a variety of teaching models

- video tape libraries of the use of various teaching models

I have not yet reviewed this list with the teachers, however this topic is one we will be discussing in our review sessions. These are my initial ideas which are not as relevant as their thoughts will be.

References

Adelson, Joseph. and O'Neil. (1966). Growth of Political Ideas in Adolescence: The Sense of Community. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 4(3). pp. 295-306.

Adelson, Joseph. (1972). The Political Imagination of the Young Adolescent. In Jerome Kagan and Robert Coles. (Eds.) Twelve to Sixteen: Early Adolescence. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. pp. 106-143.

Bogdan, Robert C. and Biklen, Sari K. (1992). Qualitative Research for Education: an Introduction to Theory and Methods. (Second Edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Chamber of Commerce. (1993). Telephone conversation.

Chilcoat, George A. and Ligon, Jerry A. (1994). Developing Democratic citizens: The Mississippi freedom schools as a model for social studies instruction. Theory and Research in Social Education. 22(2), pp. 128-175.

Coles, Robert. (1986). The Political Life of Children. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Goodlad, John I. (1984). A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Grant, Gerald. (1988). The World We Created at Hamilton High. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Greenstein, Fred I. (1968). Political Socialization. In D. L. Sills (Ed.) Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. 14, London: Macmillan.

Greenstein, Fred I. (1970). Political Orientation of Children: The use of a Semi-Projective Technique in Three Nations. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Hess, Robert D., and Torney, Judith V. (1967). The development of Political Attitudes in Children. Chicago: Aldine Publications.

Ianni, Francis, A. J. (1989). The Search For Structure. New York: The Free Press.

Inhelder, Barbel and Piaget, Jean. (1958). The Growth of Logical Thinking: From Childhood to Adolescence. New York: Basic Books.

Jennings, M. K., and Niemi, R. G. (1974). The Political Character of adolescence: The Influence of Families and Schools. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Joyce, Bruce and Weil, Marsha. (1986). Models of Teaching. (Third Ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Kiel, Norman. (1973). The Universal Experience of Adolescence. New York: International Universities Press.

Kettering Foundation. (1993). College Students Talk Politics. Dayton, OH: Author.

Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Mallery, David. (1962). High School Students Speak Out. New York: Harper and Row.

Martin, Barbara L. and Briggs, Leslie J. (1986). The Affective and Cognitive Domain: Integration for Instruction and Research. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

McNeil, Linda M. (1988). Contradictions of Control: School Structure and School Knowledge. New York: Routledge.

Merelman, Richard M. (1976). Political Reasoning in Adolescence: Some Bridging Themes. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools. (1989). Charting a Course: Social Studies for the 21st Century. Washington, DC: Author.

National Council for the Social Studies. (1979). Revision of the NCSS Social Studies Guidelines. Washington, DC: Author.

National Education Goals Panel (NEAP). (1992). The National Education Goals Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Newmann, Fred M. (1985). The radical perspective on social studies: A synthesis and critique. Theory and Research in Social Education. 13(1), pp. 1-18.

Peshkin, Alan. (1978). Growing Up in America: Schooling and the Survival of Community. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Peshkin, Alan. (1991). The Color of Strangers The Color of Friends: The Play of Ethnicity in School and Community. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Reis, Sally M. and Renzulli, Joseph S. (1985). The Secondary Triad Model. Mansfield, CT: Creative Learning Press.

Romiszowski, A. J. (1992). Designing Instructional Systems. New York: Kogan Page.

Schofield, Janet W. (1989). Black and White in School: Trust Tension or Tolerance. New York: Teachers College Press.

Seltzer, Vivian Center. (1989) The Psychosocial Worlds of the Adolescent: Public and Private. New York: John Wiley and Son.

Westholm, Anders.,Lindquist, Anne., and Niemi, Richard. (1990). Education and the

Making of the Informed Citizen: Political Literacy and the Outside World. In Orit Ichilov. (Ed.). Political Socialization, Citizenship Education, and Democracy. (pp. 177-204). New York: Teachers College Press.